

Sent to Commission.

We are all aware of the special nature of Darien's shoreline, but with familiarity comes a certain blindness, and I would like to refresh those perspectives by asking how many coastlines in the world have such an amazing variety of coastline within such a small space as we have here in Darien. We have beaches, salt marshes, off shore beach surrounded islands, major land projections, river harbors, large protected coves, clam and oyster beds, rocky outcroppings, as well as larger granite bluffs. The answer here is that our coastline is very rare and this has been historically recognized by many for hundreds of years, as well as recorded by painters whose work hang in museums around the world. Darien's coast is not only something that gives our town character and recreation, but it has an striking, varied beauty, and is something much greater than just being a part of our town. In other words, Darien's shoreline qualifies as a Landmark, visually, historically and environmentally, and this status puts it into the realm of distinction that requires a major effort by the town and state to protect some visual aspects of this rare and amazing coast.

*It is because we are few in the world that is part of a Glacial terrace*

Of course, we all agree to the protection of this major asset, but the question is whether there is the urgency to require action. Destruction comes in tiny, quiet bites of little bits and then suddenly something is forever lost. People have a right to build, and controls are always needed, but it is imperative for regulations to keep pace with the certainty of increasing development pressures for many years to come. This shoreline is threatened and the only way to keep its destruction at bay is by vigilant attention, by new P&Z regulations and

Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA) policies that cover *all* aspects of our coast, including views and granite bluffs before they are blasted away for development and profit. See attached Oct. 1, 2012 legislation, (2) (A), p.5. The process of major rock shore removal has already been completed on our shoreline areas such as on Delafield Island and Shennamere Road, and many new zoning applications will come. Visual aspects of our coastline need urgent attention and conservation. That rocky bluffs protection is in hands of Planning Zoning as well as the CCMA. Darien's amazing coastline is in their hands.

This subdivision of 123 Five Mile River before you now sits on a large granite outcropping at the mouth of a significant historic river that is vital as a Public Vista for both Darien and Rowayton, as well as passing boats. This rock's role in the past is reflected in its names "Loading Rock" or "Signal Rock" and these names demonstrate its past use for loading or signaling cargo sloops as well as "landing by packet boats". A portion of this rock has already been demolished, but the remaining serves as a monument to the activities in this harbor for the many who sail and view the coast. Because this site has had only had one structure on it for 200 years, and appears to have had extremely little soil disturbance, Indian archaeological and early fishing evidence possibly exists.

A more recent historical perspective on this particular piece of Connecticut shoreline is reflected in the paintings of John F. Kensett, who when travelling the Long Island Sound by ship in the 1870's with his artist friend Vincent Colyer, decided that this area of Darien and Rowayton was the most beautiful section of Connecticut's coastlines and needed to be recorded by paint. They settled on Contentment Island with a house and studio and Kensett created over

60 works of this area including the Fish Islands, Long Neck Point and Five Mile River many of which are currently owned by The Metropolitan Museum in New York. Since they are labeled as Contentment Island, Long Neck Point or Darien, a visitor can easily see some of them on display today.

The importance of this area has also been reinforced by opinions from both The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, as well as an independent preservation consultant, who stated the whole area of Five Mile River Road is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Rowayton has also put in place two National Register Districts along its side of Five Mile River to protect its environmental and built environment.

I would urge that this site be developed with no further destruction of the coastal edge of these rock outcroppings, or “bedrock-controlled property” as described in *Shorelands*. The current proposed plan appears to have significant blasting close to the ledge edge and Loading Rock. I believe that development of a single structure on this site would allow less shore edge blasting and more preservation of this historic Public Vista treasured and recorded by so many. Granite, unlike soil and wetlands, can never be restored. Once blasted it is forever gone.

Addendum: I have a source and request for the original 18<sup>th</sup> century posts and beams in the existing structure, and I would ask that P&Z ‘s permit include these to be put aside for others during house demolition. As this site has been undisturbed for so long, I would also suggest a visit by the State Archeologist.